

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 684

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR PBOR EFIS NS GY
SUBJ: COUNTERPOINT: A LESS BLEAK OUTLOOK ON SURINAM-GUYANA
RELATIONS

REF: PARAMARIBO 681

SUMMARY: ONE OF THE OTHER PRINCIPAL ADVISERS OF PRIME
MINISTER ARRON ON RELATIONS WITH GUYANA BELIEVES THE GUYANESE
WILL NOT HEIGHTEN EXISTING TENSION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES
AND ARE PREPARED TO SETTLE AT LEAST OUTSTANDING FISHING
QUESTIONS BY FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH TALKS OR IMPLEMENTATION
OF SOME FORM OF THE WILLS-ARRON AGREEMENT REACHED IN FEBRUARY.
END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING UP MAY 9 CONVERSATION WITH LIM A PO REPORTED
REFTEL, AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED PROSPECTS FOR SURINAM-GUYANA
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PAGE 02 PARAMA 00684 112139Z

RELATIONS WITH ANOTHER SURINAMESE LAWYER WITH LONG
EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH THE GUYANESE, KENNETH GONCALVES,
WHO IS ALSO THE ATTORNEY FOR CASTLE AND COOKE'S LOCAL SUBSIDIARY
SURINAM-AMERICAN INDUSTRIES LTD., AND WHO HAS WORKED WITH
GEORGETOWN ATTORNEY LUCKHOO ON THE CASE OF THE SURINAMESE
FISHING VESSEL SEIZED BY GUYANA LAST SEPTEMBER. GONCALVES,
WHO VOLUNTEERED THAT HIS VIEWS ON THE GUYANESE AND RELATIONS

BETWEEN SURINAM AND GUYANA DIVERGE SUBSTANTIALLY FROM THOSE OF LIM A PO (TO THE POINT, HE SAID, THE PRIME MINISTER ARRON IS NEVER QUITE SURE WHOSE ADVICE TO TAKE), HAS A MUCH MORE POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT GUYANESE ATTITUDES.

2. ACCORDING TO GONCALVES, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE GUYANESE WANT TO SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH SURINAM THROUGH TALKS (ALTHOUGHT PROBABLY NOT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CHARUARAMAS AGREEMENT AS SUGGESTED BY SURINAM PRIME MINISTER ARRON) AND MAY BE INITIATING PRIVATE CONTACTS (PERHAPS THROUGH LUCKHOO) TO COOL OFF THE ATMOSPHERE AND MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF

CARRYING OUT THE AGREEMENT REPORTEDLY REACHED BETWEEN FORMER GUYANESE FOREIGN MINISTER WILLS AND ARRON IN FEBRUARY. GOMCALVES WENT ON TO EXPLAIN HIS ESTIMATE THAT THE GUYANESE CAN ALWAYS BE EXPECTED FIRST TO TEST HOW FAR THEY CAN PUSH ON A MATTER AND THAT WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE "MIDDLE OF THE ROAD" RESPONSE SENT BY SURINAM TO GUYANA'S PROTEST NOTE WAS "A SMART NOTE" WHICH PROVIDES A BASIS FOR CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS. A WEAK REPLY, HE ADDED, MIGHT HAVE CONFOUNDED BURNHAM WHO WOULD THEN HAVE BEEN OUT ON A LIMB AS TO HOW TO FOLLOW THROUGH, WHILE A VERY TOUGH STANCE MIGHT HAVE FORCED HIM TO TAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE POSITION.

3. GONCALVES ALSO FILLED IN A BIT OF THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING THE FEBRUARY WILLS VISIT TO PARAMARIBO, SAYING THAT THE TRIP CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARAMA 00684 112139Z

HAD BEEN PROPOSED AS FAR BACK AS DECEMBER, WHEN SURINAM'S PARLIAMENT CHAIRMAN WIJNTUIN STOPPED OFF FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH WILLS IN

GEORGETOWN ON THE WAY BACK FROM A TRIP ABORAD. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT SURINAMESE LAWYER LIM A PO AND THEN GUYANESE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHAHBUDDEN DO NOT GET ALONG AND THAT THIS MIGHT HAVE STRAINED THE NEGOTIATIONS GOING ON AT THAT TIME.

4. GONCALVES DOWNPLAYED ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE PRESENT DIFFERENCE OF OPINION COULD LEAD TO ARMED CONFLICT, STATING THAT EVEN IF BURNHAM WERE TO TELL GUYANESE FISHERMEN TO GO BACK INTO THE CORANTIJN TO FISH UNDER GUYANESE POLICE OR MILITARY PROTECTION, THERE WAS NOT IN FACT ANYTHING THE SURINAMERS COULD DO ABOUT IT (NOTWITHSTANDING THE SURIMAMESE COMMANDER IN CHIEF'S PROTESTATIONS TO THE CONTRARY). HE DID NOT VIEW PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE DISPUTED BORDER TERRITORY AS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO SUPPORT A FIRM GOS POSITION AND HE DOUBTED WHETHER THE AVERAGE SURINAMER'S MENTALITY WAS PREPARED FOG ANYTHING RESEMBLING A STATE OF WAR. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT IN SPITE OF ANY LEGALITIES, MOST SURINAMERS WOULD BELIEVE THE CORANTIJN RIVER HAS TO BE SHARED WITH

THEIR NEIGHBORS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE BOTH LIM A PO AND GONCALVES ARE CLOSE TO THE GOS AND FREQUENTLY TAKE PART IN OFFICIAL MATTERS AS WELL AS PRIVATELY PRACTICE LAW, THEY DIFFER IN POLITICAL VIEWS. LIM A PO IS CLOSE TO ARRON'S NPS PARTY, WHILE GONCALVES IS CLOSE TO THE PNR OF FORMER ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MINISTER BRUMA, WHO HIMSELF WAS CONSIDERED RELATIVELY CLOSE TO BURNHAM WHILE IN OFFICE. TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, THEREFORE, THESE TWO MEN MAY BE SAID TO REPRESENT TWO COMPETING TRENDS AND APPROACHES WITHIN A BASICALLY ESTABLISHED POINT OF VIEW. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROBE FOR VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF SURINAM-GUYANA RELATIONS, INCLUDING SOURCES OUTSIDE THIS MAINSTREAM.
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PAGE 04 PARAMA 00684 112139Z

6. DEPARTMENT REQUESTED PASS THIS MESSAGE TO USCINCSO.
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